

Testimony of Montserrat Capdevila
In support of the Gaithersburg West Master Plan
September 15, 2009

Esteemed Members of the County Council.

My name is Montserrat Capdevila. I am pursuing a double MS in Biotechnology & regulatory affairs at Johns Hopkins University. I am also the president of the Johns Hopkins Biotech Network, a professional graduate student organization.

I am here tonight in support of the Gaithersburg West Master Plan as recommended by the Planning Board, with the new CCT alignment and the full 20 million sf of commercial space. It is my view that, this level of sustainable growth will allow for the critical mass of scientific talent the county needs to build a close-knit community that unites academia, government and Industry.

As a graduate student and a scientist, living in Rockville, I was extremely excited to hear about the plans to expand the Shady Grove Life Sciences Center, plans that I believe will have a positive impact on my generation and the future of this County.

We who are about to complete our education and embark on our careers want the kind of opportunity this plan provides. We cannot understand or comprehend the opposition to this plan. Scientists, whether from the US or other countries, come to Montgomery County from all over the world to create science, enhance

our knowledge and hopefully find a cure for a deadly disease. It is this promise of opportunity that brought me here from Spain.

To those who oppose the plan I ask:

Why oppose a plan that could help attract and retain the most “talented” scientific minds in Montgomery County? Why oppose a plan that can put scientists to work in the bioscience, healthcare and technology industries?

Why wouldn't residents welcome the next Nobel laureate (which I plan to be)?

If you want to have great science happen here, then you need to provide the kind of place that makes great science possible, and that is what this plan does.

I believe many opponents of the Shady Grove Science Center are distorting the facts and engaging in fear mongering instead of reasoned debate. I have heard references to “Tysons Corner,” a place this plan bears no resemblance to at all. Regardless of people's views, they ought to be grounded in facts, and right now many of the neighborhood groups opposing this plan are spreading falsehoods.

I can understand, people often fear change, but this is an area that needs to change, if we want Montgomery County to remain a leading center of science and healthcare innovation it must change. Science creates growth, science enhances unity, and science is organized knowledge.

Opponents say: “Scale it Back,” but I say “Don’t scale back my dreams, or your own economic future.” “Scale it back” is the voice of yesterday, not the voice of tomorrow. It is the voice of those who already have everything, not the voice of those still seeking opportunity. Your choice is clear: Do you want to keep our science and healthcare industries competitive for future generations? When I find the cure to ovarian cancer one day, don’t you want me to do it here, in Montgomery County?

As the County Executive says: *“We can be the place where solutions are found for the elimination of disease, world hunger, protection of the environment, and a reduction in energy consumption.”*

Today I ask;

Give young scientists the tools we need. Give us a place to research, live, play and collaborate. Keep me in Montgomery County. I promise you will not regret it and I guaranteed that I will make you proud you did.

Thank you for your attention.

Montserrat Capdevila

20 Maryland Ave Unit 309

Rockville, MD 20850